

ON HOLIDAY  

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IN WAR TIME.  

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By R. F. BEARD,  
1914.





ALPERS

# ON HOLIDAY IN WARTIME



BY † R. F. BEARD  
Nº 25 † † † † † 1914



Russia	France	Belgium	Great Britain	Japan
Servia				Mandchuria

Coats of Arms  
on Index page.

Austria	Hungary	Norway	Germany	Turkey
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ACROSS  
FRANCE



ACROSS  
FRANCE

Now tell us all about the war,  
And what they kill'd each other for.

.....  
Why, that I cannot tell, said he,  
But 'twas a famous victory.

ROBERT SOUTHEY



**Crossing** France in the autumn of 1914 one could not fail to have experiences and see sights which would impress themselves strongly on the memory. It was a lovely day for crossing from Folkestone to Dieppe and the "Arundel" had a good number of passengers, indeed the train from Victoria had been run in duplicate. There seemed the elements of a tragedy at the port of departure. A young Frenchman paced the deck in a state of frightful agitation. He pressed his hands to his temples, gazed up to the heavens, exclaimed "Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu," flushed and paled by turns. He appeared



to me and in the course of an eloquent outburst, the greater part of which was unintelligible, I learned, not that his fiancée had just been crushed by a steam roller or swallowed by a shark, but that his luggage had been temporarily mislaid. I suggested that it would turn up, as did others to whom he appealed, and it did. Its advent recalled the return of the prodigal son. He half embraced the erring porter and gave him two pence.

Contrary to expectation the french authorities did nothing in the way of examination or investigation to delay the progress of the journey and



it is a curious fact that at no place or time was a passport asked for, or name and address, until I reached the southern frontier and was about to leave the country. It made travelling easy, but it was too slack. The train services being of necessity very restricted the journey south of Paris was not commenced until early the following morning. There were several soldiers on the train and amongst them a tirco, — a man of fine physique, — who had been for a month at the front and, so far as I could understand, was sent down for a rest, as he was not wounded. He was quite a lion at the various railway stations. Officers



and men came up to hear him in his clipped french, tell of the fighting line. His invariable farewell was, "A voir tous". Towards the end of the journey he danced native fashion and worked himself up into a state of excitement, and before we dispersed he came and shook hands all round. At Vendôme there was a train from Nantes, en route for the front, filled with british soldiers. It gave one quite a thrill to see the familiar uniform inside the wagons that contain either so many horses or so many men. The wounded were everywhere at the stations and on the train. At nearly every stopping place collections were



made 'pour les blessés', and frequently women came along with wine, coffee and milk for the wounded travelling. Our carriage had, not long before, borne soldiers to the north, for scrawled in chalk on a doorway were the following words 'le 20 régiment de Dragon', 'à passer le 24 Septre direction à Berlin pour coupé la tête à Guillaume' (sic). At Bordeaux, by a stroke of luck and the services of a friendly porter, I found a train leaving for Pau and took my seat as it started on the journey, so that any impression of the seat of the French Republic, pro. tem, is severely circumscribed by the limitations of my

experiences in that city, indeed, did I give them, the retort would probably be, 'Bah, Cubiste'.

The far famed view from the terrace at Pau was not at its best next morning for clouds obscured the ridges and peaks for the entire length of the Pyrenees, but as the day wore on the mists crept upward. A stay in Lourdes was enforced because of the meagre train service, and there was plenty to fill up the time. Sights old and new, the grotto and the churches, the Stations of the Cross with their groups of life size figures, and the wounded, of which there were very many at Lourdes, well housed in the



guest houses and tended by Sisters of Charity. A service of motor ambulances seemed to be in constant use, and as we had arrived at the station so was a military funeral procession passing to the cemetery. The votive church is more crowded with advertisements than ever; the wealthy Monsieur and Madame So-and-so had their names and actions recorded in gold on a marble slab, and Monsieur somebody else has had recourse to a lead pencil on the surface of a stone pillar. In between there are all varieties, those paid for varying in size and ostentation, those not being in the main pencilled signatures. The general result is -

hideous, as it deserves to be, and  
reconciles one to seeing the altars  
numbered off with great card numbers  
for facility in allocation.

The light railway which runs up  
to Luz - St Sauveur traverses a  
beautiful valley, leaving that to  
Bauterets on the right. Exuberant with  
foliage and possessing magnificent gorges  
it is small wonder that Napoleon III  
and the Empress Eugénie should visit  
here. A fine single span bridge remains  
as a souvenir. A plain clothes police  
-man was on the train and for the  
first time since arriving in France my  
passport was asked for; the next day  
the operation was repeated by the



customs guard. The landlady at Luz had a husband and two brothers under arms and she seemed depressed, particularly at the prospect of the german commercials not coming back later. A natural thing, I suppose. These men are efficient, they speak the language well, and thoroughly understand what is wanted; 'Good' 'customers lost', that would be her point of view no doubt. However her depression was limited, there was a certain amount of exaltation in the bill which seemed to be characteristic of the valley generally, a part of the Pyrenees much frequented by well to do tourists in normal times.

The chief feature of Luz is its Templar Church, dating from the ~~XII~~ XIII century, which looks more like a fort from without and reminds one of Agde.

In no spirit of levity but because it seemed the best thing to take, — and experience proved that it was, — I had two german sausages in my knapsack, a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine, so, on the way to Gavarnie, just before entering Chaos, where foliage gives way to the gigantic remains of a prehistoric avalanche, I took a meal *à fresco* with blackberries for dessert. The blackberry is a very delicious fruit when of full size and ripe, but so feminine in character that



LUZ.

Church of the Templars.  
south side.



Church of the Templars • • • Luz.



the slightest variation in soil or aspect affects the flavour, so that the plucking en route often offers surprises, sometimes welcome, sometimes otherwise. Now it is not thus with the sloe, which is more masculine and independent. Size, bloom and firmness are the qualities to look for, and if these three are to the fore you will have a fruit that will vie with the grape, save as to juice. Indeed there is one particular bush between Roda and Aren, on the eastern frontier ridge of Aragon, which may be taken as a standard. May it long flourish where it is, — off the track.

From Gèdre, where the valley makes a turn, there is a wonderful view of

the Breche de Roland, that piece ripped out of the frontier ridge which lies straight ahead. Fine weather is needful to see it and on this Sunday it was delightful. The villagers and peasants from the hamlets round were waiting outside the Church for Mass to commence; and there was no disproportion of women. The first sight of the Cirque de Gavarnie is imposing and, like the photographs, misleading. Some three miles away stands the huge amphitheatre of sombre rock with ridges of snow and, to the left, a waterfall; this latter, which is but a thread upon the picture, is 1385 feet in height. By a tiring walk over rough pasture and



through a wood one reaches the two  
hotels, which are open only in the height  
of the season, and from there the grandeur  
of the scene imposes itself upon you  
and it is possible to make out that the  
semicircle of dark precipices is broken  
up by narrow terraces of comparatively  
flat land where the snow and ice lie.  
When, after a toilsome clamber over  
loose rock and moraine, the wanderer  
finds himself immediately under the  
frowning cliffs the grandeur is enhanced,  
for glacier ridges are lost to sight and  
the precipices appear to tower away to  
where the sierra-like mountain range,  
reaching to 10,670 feet, stands out against  
the sky. It was a lovely afternoon but

here in the Cirque it was winter, cold, gloomy, an inspiration for Dore when illustrating the Inferno. At the base of the centre a huge bridge of snow gave passage to running water, but the only sound was that of the falling waters of the Grand Cascade which dropped such a distance that the pieces seemed to individualise and appear like separate bodies which had lost their balance, turned somersaults, and finally fell head foremost on the rocky floor below. There were a good many visitors at Gavarnie, amongst them a wounded general of the French army, but none came as far as the Cirque itself, and the solitude accentuated the gloomy



magnificence of the spot. The sun's visits to its recesses must be very rare and of very limited duration.

The Pyrenean Alpine Club has its headquarters at the Hotel at Gavarnie, and it is very fitting that a statue to that pioneer of Pyrenean mountaineering, the Englishman Count Henry Russell, should have been put up here, but what is still more fitting is the manner of the statue: the figure of the count is life size, in bronze, just put on the side of a bank by the highroad. Many have no doubt done as I did, entered the place without seeing it and subsequently found it when strolling about. Surely the dead man would have wished to

be remembered thus, a part of the landscape without obtrusion resting by the wayside, not parading in the market place.

In one of the French illustrated papers there was a capital sketch of a highlander, but all interest in the drawing and appreciation of the artist vanished when one read the legend beneath, "Scotch Ripper".

The Port de Gavarnie is 7485 feet high and, in accordance with a sound rule, should be crossed before midday so by 7.20 am, after a simple breakfast of bread and honey, I set out. The weather was ideal and remained so all day. For a long while the continuously ascending path kept the cirque in sight, and one



of the last things seen was the upper part of the Grand Cascade rushing over to the long drop into space. A turn into the upper valley brought the Port into view at the farther end with, on the right, pasture slopes leading up to a rock ridge bathed in sunshine, and, on the left, bare stone covered slopes leading to a black ridge, snow capped and streaked, and sunk in shadow: in the midst of this latter ridge is the Brèche de Roland with its glaciers before it. Had I had a willing companion I should have been inclined to have ventured on this crossing instead of the Port, for the weather was perfect and the time was young, but alone it seemed

too much to venture. The legend runs that the famous warrior made the breach with his sword Durandal, to effect a passage into France on his way home. There is a stone shelter half way up this valley, and inside was a finch with an orange coloured breast.

The view from the Port could not fail to be grand, but was so shut in that it lacked variety and charm. Savage looking mountains and sterile slopes filled in the middle distance, while snow clad violet tinted peaks and ranges closed in the horizon. The Vignemale was there, the Marboré, and many more. But the chill wind of the Port was blowing so away I started down



the Spanish side on a steep zig zag. The bay of a young pyrenean hound was the first sign of life and a few minutes later I came on the master, a shepherd with bare feet, iron studded leather sandals, and a sheepskin wallet, who was doing his daily round in the high pastures. He had two hounds with him, a young one of three months and a very fine dog of twelve months which, he said, was very dangerous after dark. We sat down together and lunched. It seemed that the port is but little used, a week may pass without anyone crossing. As soon as he knew I was an Englishman he said, 'what about the war?', and from that time forth my dream of

a respite from the war and its doings was always dispelled by that question starting conversations and discussions difficult to get away from. After a rough descent to the head of the valley a pleasant path through the woods lasted nearly an hour, and then the way is stony and wild until at a bend the high valley leading to Mont Perdu (10,995 feet) is passed and Yorla, the first village, comes into sight. At Yorla there was a 'fiesta' but it was a very tin pot affair, its most interesting feature being a fair sprinkling of middle aged men in Aragonese costume; the young men seem to be discarding this most picturesque dress. At the inn there was a young Frenchman



who was obviously evading conscription, but in all the frontier districts I passed through I only saw one other who might be called a deserter, and he was an undersized middle aged man who was said to have a wife and eight children. Of course the war was the topic of conversation at Sorla, as it was later on at Broto where the night was passed. There was quite a little party at dinner, which, by the way, took place in my bedroom. The village priest, the senior lieutenant of carabinieri, who was making a visit of inspection, a local man, a farmer, the landlord and myself. The meal and conversation spun out till 10.30pm, when I was left to solitude, the reek of

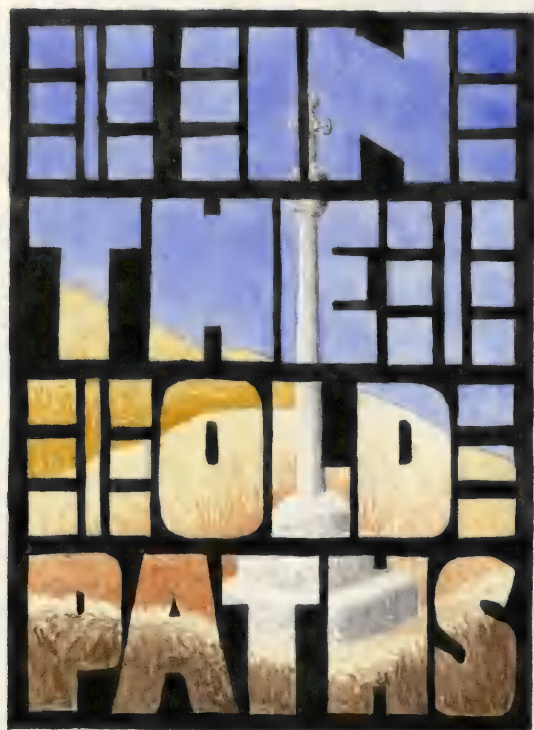
tobacco, and the odours of a meal, but not to silence, for it being a *Sant's* day there was dancing going on down below for another hour.

One of the difficulties of these frontier villages is the number of individuals who insist on speaking the language of the neighbouring country in such a manner that the un instructed foreigner finds it extremely difficult to ascertain what is meant, and to ask that the native tongue should be employed is to run the risk of hurting somebody's feelings.



To facilitate travel.





Here we have met,  
We know not why;  
Suns rise and set  
And moons wane by;  
Awhile we feed  
A tiny flame,  
And dying speed  
To whence we came;  
ALFRED WILLIAMS

It is a weary road from Broto down the valley towards the plains. A high road all the way with fine views and gorges, but winding, monotonous, and tiring. The pleasantest passage was about an hour out, where I was resting, in a wood at the broad mouth of a side stream, a place where a few years back the crossing was attended with considerable danger when there was much water, as crosses and shrines upon the way attest. All was quiet when an inquisitive robin came hopping round, he came close up to me on one side and then made a voyage of scrutiny right round evidently



bird life is not much scared in these parts. About four in the afternoon I came to Boltaña, the chief town in the district and the first telegraph station. After some little delay the operator was found and fetched, and he took the message subject to war risks. It was dispatched in Spanish but arrived at its destination at Brighton via Bilbao, six hours later, in English. Having stopped at Boltaña on a previous occasion the innkeeper seemed disappointed that I should not spend the night there, failing which he plunged into a discussion on the war from which at last I broke away and reached the inn below the heights of Anisa at dusk.

The girl who waited at table that evening became most distressed when, towards the end of the meal, she found she had not given me a napkin, called herself names and each time she returned broke out in renewed lamentations at her remissness. A desire to avoid any further forgetfulness may account for my being knocked up at 4 am to catch the motor coach that connects with the railway at Barbastro, but as I was not wanting any such coach the insistent knocking could have been dispensed with. When I did get up it was a grey morning, and before long the rain came down necessitating refuge and a visit to the walled town

of Ainsa which is well above the road.  
There was soon a little crowd of soldiers,  
men belonging to the place, and children.  
One old man was very voluble when  
the war was mentioned, and for some  
time I was under the impression that  
he was speaking a patois peculiar  
to the district, only to discover that he  
'spoke beautiful French,—like a native'.  
Before midday the weather cleared, so  
following a path as directed for about  
a mile and a half I came upon the  
Cross of Sobrarbe, a highly venerated  
and very ancient relic. It consists of  
a piece of stone, ten feet or more in height,  
shaped like the trunk of a tree and  
surmounted by a foliated top sculptured



in conventional form and verdigris in colour, as if the upper part were of copper: upon the pillar has been placed an iron cross. In front is a stone altar on two round pillars. The Cross is preserved from the elements by a domed cover, supported on six doric columns. Those I spoke to on the subject maintained that the Cross was a christian relic but one, a priest, seemed to think that something might be said for it being a relic of druidical or similar worship. The name Sobrarbe stands for the ancient kingdom which covered the mountains and valleys of the central Spanish Pyrenees, one of the districts that made the mohammedan invader pause and turn back.

It was time for the vintage to commence; indeed the next day saw men and women stripping the vines and loading the mules and donkeys with deep wooden pails, filled with either black or white fruit. On this last day before the vintage it was but natural that the vineyards should look at their best. The Spanish vine is sturdy and needs no support, but the weight of the bunches of grapes made some heel over a trifle. There was one crop of white grapes, on the hillside overlooking the main road towards Bielsa and the central Pyrenees, that looked delicious, — and were. The path beyond the Cross of Sobrarbe had ceased, and the way

perforce led in and out amongst the vines and finally down a dried up water course to the road. At the first village, Labuerda, I sought information as to an inn. The man I asked was busy inside his house, he did not stop but merely said, 'Yes', jerked his head towards a bridge and indicated that there was one on the other side, and then remarked, 'French?' 'No, English'. With a bound he left his work, came outside, said he would show me where the inn was, and then said, 'What about the war?' The inn was a poor place, somewhat poverty stricken, but they managed to serve a decent meal and serve it well. An hour after I came in sight of Laspuna



which should have been my midday resting place had the weather held, but the lay of the country did not attract overmuch and negatived to some extent the earlier regret. The walk back by the old road, if rather rough, was distinctly preferable to the monotonous highway. Being early I revisited Ainsa to find it en fête; a review of the twenty soldiers or so quartered here going on in the plaza, and there were decorations and hangings in honour of a visit from the Bishop of Barbastro. A procession of children very well dressed and wearing blue ribbons and medals was followed by the prelate and clergy who however were not vested. There was only one

occupant of the café, a lady who had lived in Cuba over thirty years and was spending a short time in Spain on account of her son's illness. She was loud in praise of Cuba, its climate and its life, and spoke of the paralysing effect of the war on the tobacco industry.

Failing Cuba a Barcelona boarding house of first rate quality at three pesetas a day was a reasonable way to live.

During the last few years a bridge has been built across the Cinca and a road made as far as Toro, a village in a lateral valley running eastward. Had one of our modern essayists been in my shoes he would no doubt have

written a charming article on eating an apple by the wayside, which was done beneath the checkered shade of a little copse on the approach to Toro; the sun shone gloriously and all was peace.

However it was a peace that preceded war for as soon as Toro was left behind so was the road, and the information from people one occasionally met was mistifying. After much scrambling of one sort and another the way followed a river bed and eventually landed me at a farm house where some bread, wine, and fruit were obtainable so that, adding the german sausage, the meal was quite passable. My host was a basketweaver who had spent sometime in Bordeaux



and he took an interest in the war. The vintage, it appeared, was only so-so this year on account of the 'niebla', or excess of misty weather. One old man at work in his vineyard had said this rather dolefully. Anyhow, I said, 'the vintage is beginning'. He laughed and said 'Si, señor'. I believe that really the vintage was quite a respectable one but it seems customary to decry it a bit, perhaps on the same principle as the successful dealer who is always losing money by it. The path continued to be intricate and, in one part, a young girl kindly led the way for about a quarter of a mile, but when I proffered her a coin, without any more ado she gathered

up her skirts and ran away as hard as she could. I am still at a loss as to exactly why she did so, whether she feared some attack or what, but no calling out on my part would induce her to stop or turn back. Up and down, in and out of the arid barrancas, the way went on past Foradada, where they put me up when I went astray in 1908, until at dusk I reached Navarru on the banks of the Esera, when down came the rain. There was no time to stop, it was necessary to find the bridge before dark, and crossing it in a somewhat sodden condition I made for an inn, only to find the accommodation meagre and that there was no meat in the place. This not seeming a fit conclusion

to the day I set out again and marched on in the dark by the highway to Campo, last visited in 1896, reaching the hotel in the plaza just in right time to effect a change and sit down to dinner in pajamas. The innkeeper, an elderly man, was very keen on the subject of the war and with two other guests the conversation became quite animated; but all were friendly to the Allies. One of those present had other things to talk about; he seemed to be a sort of cheerful Jeremiah. Hearing me say that the sun had pricked a bit (an idiomatic expression for finding it striking hot), he took the expression literally and suggested it was really a scorpion or something of



that sort, and told two heart rending tales of men who, within the past week, had been bitten respectively by a scorpion and a snake, through just sitting down by a mountain path, and that their lives were despaired of.

A dull rainy morning led to a late start, and it was midday before the high road was left behind and the ascent commenced towards the ridge dividing the ancient Kingdom of Sobrarbe from that of Ribagorza, one of the remote parts of Aragon. After a tiring climb, accomplished with much effort and perspiration, I found from some children tending cattle that it was necessary to descend at least half the distance to

regain the proper path. The road was rough and continuously up and down. Soon after passing the ridge, and while wasting half an hour on choosing a path, the rain began and it soon became a race for daylight, indeed the last half hour's walking was in the dark with the river on one side and a ditch on the other. Lights from the backs of the upper houses of Poble de Roda eventually cheered the gloom, and soon after I was sitting in the circle round the wood fire, pajama clad, with the sodden things hanging up to dry. The landlord, a fine specimen of the old type of Aragonese, had died, aged 63, three months before and the son,

who had been a soldier in Morocco when I had last visited the place in 1910 was now home and following the occupation of a miller. Another son, who was consumptive, had died some time since.

The weather was wet again the next morning until about ten o'clock, the chief consolation being that it was good weather for sowing. When it did clear, and the sun shone, the snow white peaks and ranges with a background of limpid blue made a delightful panorama.

In that cradle of Christianity, the Cathedral of Roda, reposes the fabulously valuable chair of San Ramón, but it was not to be seen, that is not without an order from the Bishop of Lérida



These precautions are not to be wondered at for curios seekers, mainly Americans, are always on the look out for some rare object to put in some museum or private collection, robbing it of half its beauty by removing it from its own setting. Later on I learned that at La Seo de Urgel the vicar of one of the churches there had sold an altar piece of great antiquity. It appeared that the Bishop of the diocese was powerless to interfere and that the consent of the Bishop of Barcelona, which was necessary, had been given on the score that the financial needs of the church in question justified the sale.

The miller watched me coming.

down the mountain side from Roda and after I had crossed the river and passed up by the mill stream invited me to enter. The machinery, which included a great heavy olive-crushing mill, seemed primitive but effective. Mules and donkeys were awaiting their loads, and it seemed that the price of flour per sack was 25 pts, nearly one pound. The flour is not white, but it is of pure wheat and there is no bleaching.

That night round the fire we numbered sixteen, and there were twenty people in the house. Some were returning from the fair at Zaragoza and one traveller, a woman, had met me before somewhere or other.

Sun day justified its name. The widowed landlady and her daughter-in-law, cloaked in black, came to say good bye before going to mass, leaving me to my early breakfast. Before the sun was over the ridge of the sierra I was ascending the approach to San Esteban del Moll, after an hour's climb through olive groves and vineyards. Two men were in the wine shop where I called and would have prolonged the stay to talk about the war, but the way was long and it is a bad thing to get delayed at the wrong end so, with some short dogmatic statements that we should win sooner or later, I took the winding way which circles down to the head of a torrent.



thence under the lee of a ridge until it reaches, at right angles, the wide upward rise that leads to the col, from where one looks towards Cataluña and stretches of blood red earth. On the way I fell in with two peasants with one of whom I journeyed to the col and there left him, for he was bound for a mountain village some way further on. The land on the top of the ridge is very boggy, and it is an ugly place in winter time. On this day there was some wind blowing, but tucked away under the lee of a wall near the guiding Cross that stands on the summit of the pass, with mountains all round, range upon range, snow covered and purple streaked, it was just the

spot for the midday halt and the midday meal. The track onwards is literally and actually a twister, and familiar as it seemed, — for I had crossed the path four times before, and this was the third time in the same direction, — within twenty minutes of leaving the col I deviated and found myself approaching a village, with a huge piece of bare mountain side opposite of flaming crimson. Thereafter the devious way was adhered to. When the last long descent over smooth rock was reached the rain began to fall, but it proved a mere shower and the wet brown roofs of the well to do country town of Aren shone under the sun's rays as I entered about 3.30 pm. There was a very hearty

welcome, a meal in ten minutes and all the news. The eldest daughter was married; the highroad from the south would be completed within six months, and then there would be a coach service to Lérida; fifty men had just come down from Seret after the season's felling in the forests and they all wanted beds for the night, let them go to the peasants' private houses, they would be glad of their custom, and so on and so forth.

Strolling by the path towards the Noguera Ribagorçana, a man in charge of a vineyard not yet cleared, hailed me with, 'Who travels by this bad path and whither bound?' This commenced a lengthy conversation, which included



an invitation to partake of the fruit of the vine, and while we talked another approached who was also queried as to his reasons for choosing such a vile apology for a path. He turned out to be the schoolmaster and we three journeyed on together, making a circular walk as from Aren. We reached the river where the bridge spans it and links up Aragon and Cataluña. Here we overtook the parish priest and his curate, and pursued the way together. Soon the priest and I were immersed in the subject of the war. This priest seemed to me to have as good a knowledge of the facts as anyone I had come across. He knew a great deal about the

respective ages and capacities of the English and German war vessels, of which many have little or no knowledge. He was like others greatly impressed by the power and efficiency of the Germans, and while admitting the enormous number of men possessed by Russia, doubted that it necessarily meant an enormous number of soldiers. Undoubtedly his prejudices had been aroused by the treatment of the Roman Catholic Church by the French, but his definite expressed opinions were very limited. 'As for me', he said, 'I am a man of peace. The news I read confuses me; it more often contradicts than confirms, but of two things I am certain. That this

'is not progress. That in the end all'  
'will lose and the victors will not gain'

After dinner and coffee the two sons of the house and a friend brought out their guitars and a bandurria, and from thence on till 11.30 pm music and dancing went merrily on. Some eight or ten young girls came in and sat apart till the dancing commenced, when the young men came up for partners. As the evening wore on and there was more go, the ladies being limited in number, the males would claim partners from those dancing so that there should not be any undue monopoly. One of the dancers was a dark, lithe, handsome young man, who told me at dinner



that he had crossed the Port de Viella over twenty times. It would take something special to make me do it a second time, — it is a bad port. The dance was held in honour of a local man, who was leaving for Gerona at four the next morning in order to complete his term of military service. In one of the intervals between tangos and waltzes the elder guitarrist came over to chat about his instrument, which he played well, and in a crisp sentence he expressed the views of himself and many others as to Germany, "Germany," "in the ascendent means 'absolutismo'."

The girls seemed to stand the incessant dancing without any trouble, but the men began to discard their hats, then

their jackets, and some their ties and collars. One oldish man, clad in — Aragonese breeches and a catalan cap, — a spectator, — who reminded me of a humorous London cabman, filled with the spirit of Terpsichore and some other stuff at a halfpenny a glass, essayed a fandango about 11pm and did it very well. He wished me to join in but I had not had enough to drink. It was a very pleasant Sunday evening.

The morning's experience was something entirely new. Everywhere was a thick fog, and it was a full hour after starting, when the path ascended, that gaps appeared and pieces of scenery,

— a wooded glen, a lonely farmhouse or a fragment of blue sky, — became visible. There were quite a number of muleteers on the road, going and coming, and the dreaded long corkscrew pull to the ridge of the sierra proved not unpleasant. One erstwhile companion passing me at lunch time offered his wine skin. In the afternoon I met the postman; he, poor chap, has a hard life of it. Setting out every day about 2 pm from Yremp he does the five hours' tramp to Aren and, after a stay, returns the same night. At Talarn, a biggish village overlooking the highroad, I bought a café, of which there are three. The first one was shut up, the second had



no coffee made, and the other had no coffee at all. This sort of place might delight the heart of a Chesterton, but a thirsty man is not nourished by paradox and I pushed on wearily to Salas, where there was coffee albeit cold; but brandy, water, sugar, and cold coffee, make a very good drink. A coal mine has been started near Salarn, and at Poble de Segur there are great salt works in existence, all of which are stranded for the time being because of the war. Much of the capital is foreign held. All along the road the vintage was in progress, women picking the grapes, mules loaded or waiting to be loaded on the roadside. Poble de Segur has gone ahead. There is a fine

bridge over the wide river bed, and the modest hotel is now turned into a palatial edifice, where correctly dressed waiters serve a kind of apple fritters with your beer, and dinner is as in Barcelona; and the price has remained reasonable.

The weather was summer like, and it was very hot walking through the magnificent gorge that leads to Gerri, with its salt pits, and beyond to Sort. The highroad, that was washed away in the floods of 1907, has been made good so as to be used, but is not yet properly restored. The number of mules one sees attached to carts in Spain is often astonishing, but I never saw a greater

number than on one cart going down this valley. It had nine harnessed & tandem fashion and a spare one behind. Just after passing this team I encountered three men, one of whom I heard say, "Now what is he, a german or a french-man?" "An Englishman," I called out, and they all wished me a pleasant journey. At last the river is to be deviated, and extensive works are in progress for making a river bed; a stone bridge, rather squat in appearance, has already been built. The young daughter of the innkeeper had died last spring, aged seventeen. Her father proved a vigorous supporter of the allies, and the café that evening was noisy with argument.



and declamation. I came across a pro  
german paper, 'El Correo', and, after  
perusal, passed it on to the landlord,  
who looked at the title and that was  
enough; he threw it down, would have  
nothing to do with it, and gave me a  
look of pained surprise. Its contents  
were not soothing balm and portions  
were intensely irritating, so perhaps  
he did best to leave it alone. The  
Secretary, or Town Clerk, was a pronounced  
germanophilist, but learning I was English  
he made himself very agreeable and  
did not afterwards refer to the war.  
It read somewhat strangely in an  
illustrated paper that "It is a long way  
to Tipperary" was the English soldiers' hymn.

Cold and clear, with bright sunshine, the day for ascending to the Sanctuary of San Juan del Hierro proved an ideal one. One of those days when you want to go to all sorts of places and make excursions which normally one looks upon as risky. I wished I could have been at Esplot and able to explore Los Encantados, but once on the edge of the beech woods with birds singing and the occasional sound of the woodman's axe, with a vista embracing more and more as the path ascended, and longing for other places ceased, — it was all so very good. From one point, somewhere between four and five thousand feet up, there was a magnificent view to the

north and west; to the north were the frontier peaks of the Republic of Andorra, then those of France, further west the cluster of the enchanted mountains, and on the extreme north west, peering above the sierra and bathed in sunshine, the Pic de Néthou, the Maladetta, the crowning point of the Pyrenees. All these peaks and sierras were bedight with snow freshly fallen, and either sparkling like crystal or softly shadowed like dull velvet. There seemed to be two kinds of squirrels in the woods, one a red brown, the other a dark striped variety. The previous time I had covered the same ground had been with E. Phillips in 1911, and then, night overtaking us, we had lost the way. I found the point where



we lost it, — and it was a pardonable error, — and timed the distance on to the sanctuary: it was just twenty five minutes. Within the previous seven days a youth of the village of Roni, nearby, had lost his way at the same spot and overshot the mark more than we did; he was more fortunate in that he fell in with a wayfarer and got put straight. There was another missing face. The chaplain, whom I met some few times, not long after our last visit had gone out on a shooting expedition and by accident had killed himself. His successor proved a very agreeable man. A dozen or so sat round the fire that evening, — a splendid fire with logs six feet in length,

young trees in fact, — and they were mainly men crossing to Esterri or the confines of Andorra. The talk fell much upon passes, when they could be used — and when they were death traps. One young fellow, to emphasise the awful character of one mountain byway, spoke of an adventurer, who met his death there, as being 'mort, mort completament'. This must be the death of deaths. He put this straight however later. So soon as my good old friend the hostess and cook said, "the soup is ready," we settled down to hear the rosary. The cura let it go and did very well but it got wearisome, and when, towards the end, he recited a list of saints, at the

conclusion the young peasant muttered,  
"Buenas tardes señores," (Good evening gentlemen)  
His companion, more prosaic, was keeping  
up his responses, but his yawns were as  
loud as his sentences. As he finished, I  
said to the priest, "you must be tired"  
"Not at all but I am hungry," so off we  
went to dinner, and excellent it was; the  
pièce de résistance, in the shape of a  
partridge, would have done credit to  
any table. Anyhow we two left nothing  
of it.

The Sacristan, Antonio Moles, was  
away collecting tithes and rents, but his  
wife had told me that I should meet  
him on his way home, when I set out  
in the morning. Snow still covered the



ground, and close to the sanctuary it was  
a foot deep and had been much more three  
or four days back. It sparkled in the sunlight.  
Never imagining I should lose the path  
I went merrily on till I found myself  
astray in a fir forest, and later, that  
being put right, pitched on a wrong  
course over the Col de Basseta (5906 ft)  
and dropped into a steep wood which  
took a lot of getting out of. When I did  
get clear and saw the proper route there  
in the distance was Antonio with his  
mule slowly ascending but he neither  
saw nor heard me, so, with a pang of  
regret, I saw him disappear above and  
took the opposite direction to Castellbò,  
a welcome place to halt at. A family

of English people had been through the previous year, none of them knowing any Spanish or Catalan, "but," said the man who told me, "they did not seem to be" "disturbed at all and got along quite well."

We look back on, in the still afternoon light, the snowcapped tops of the mountain of San Juan appeared cold and uninviting, better as a picture than a place of pilgrimage, but, as a matter of fact, it is one of the places of pilgrimage.

Leio de Urgel is as before. There seems no change these last few years although the road to the French frontier is all but completed. It being the week before the annual fair things were slow.

The long valley which leads due

east from La Seo through several narrow gorges, eventually to emerge into the broad valley of Cerdaña, is naturally a warm spot. Vegetation and cultivation tell the tale when the sun is not shining, but the sun made it patent and a dead snake in the roadway acted as endorsement. A further proof was furnished by the appearance of a live snake within six inches of my foot. It was fully two and a half feet in length and I was heartily glad to see him take to the rocks and wriggle out of sight. The man at Campo would have rejoiced had he been present. By the side of the highway, in accordance with usage, runs a trench about three feet wide and two feet deep. These trenches



I had always seen dry or nearly so, but this time water was running to the brim, showing how much snow and rain had fallen and how early winter had set in, the earliest for twenty years or more. The old inn at Martinet was vacant and the people had apparently left the neighbourhood, so I dined at the rival establishment from where, seven years ago, we were guided by two smuggler friends who glowered on the persistent landlord and quite frightened him. Just after Martinet you enter Berdaña proper; the air is cooler, a valley of pastures and stretches of arable land, not of vines and fig trees.

Señora Tuset, at the Casa Viayna,

Belloer, is an old friend and I soon learnt from her how business stood through the war. The banks were declining to advance money and there was a consequent stifling of trade. Her son who was in business at Barcelona had come home. There were a number of Germans at Barcelona and several moving about the country: just recently three had passed the night at Belloer, they did not speak either Spanish or French but were well supplied with money, presumably escaped prisoners from some French town. One of the guests told me of the heavy purchases of sugar made by England in Spain, and the French were buying up all the clothing they could get, and mules were at a premium.



BELLEVER.

The plate-roofed building  
is the Casa Viayna.






While sitting in the café I received a letter informing me that my boy had joined the Army Service Corps, which information I promptly imparted. It was not received with enthusiasm "How old is he?" "This war is a wretched affair," and so on and so forth; but here as elsewhere their sympathies were with the allies, and for the first time in Spain I came across german spy fever, which recalled an incident at Nocellas, near Roda, in 1908, thus noted, 'It seemed that a german' 'had been that way some time this' 'year collecting statistical information,' 'which would appear to point to some' 'new and elaborate gazetteer'

**PASSE-PORT**

*England*

<p>Signaturement</p> <p>Age: <i>30 ans</i></p> <p>Taille: <i>1 m 70</i></p> <p>Cheveux: <i>châtain</i></p> <p>Sourcil: <i>brun</i></p> <p>Front: <i>de la courbe</i></p> <p>Yeux: <i>gris</i></p> <p>Nas: <i>fort</i></p> <p>Bouche: <i>modérée</i></p> <p>Barbe: <i>modérée</i></p> <p>Moustache: <i>modérée</i></p> <p>Visage: <i>ovale</i></p> <p>Tenue: <i>cotte</i></p> <p>Signes particuliers: .....</p> <p>Signature du porteur: <i>Edith Bours</i></p>	<p>Nous, Préfet du Pas-de-Calais, rendons les Autrichiens, Hongrois, Allemands, pour libérer de <i>Boulogne-sur-Mer</i> département de <i>Pas-de-Calais</i> à <i>Boulogne-sur-Mer</i> Le sieur <i>Richard Arthur Bours</i> profession de <i>commerçant</i> né à <i>Brighton</i> <i>Angleterre</i> demeurant à <i>Brighton</i> et à lui donne protection en cas de besoin.</p> <p>Fait à Boulogne-sur-Mer, le <i>18 Août</i> 1914.</p> <p>Pr le Préfet Le Sous-Préfet de Boulogne, <i>Unif</i></p>
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Souvenir of the War. Issued in  
Boulogne 7/mer 18th August 1914.



NEW  
OUR  
WILD  
WEATHER

Por cosas de este mundo  
Nunca te apures,  
Que no hay mal que no acabe  
Ni bien que dure.

CAMPOAMOR.

*Let not passing events  
Cause thee any concern,  
Evil lasts but a season  
And good but a turn.*

Hilaire Belloc has written in glowing terms of the Sierra de Gadi as being apparently, of incredible height; and certainly the appearance of this steep and lofty range is always impressive, and under certain atmospheric conditions the effects produced are extraordinary.

This I knew not at the time, but before the end of ten hours close acquaintance with the sierra was to know most thoroughly. Before the sun was up I was at the base of the mountains, which spring abruptly from the plain, and entered a long and picturesque valley which narrowed so much that the path was continuously crossing the stream until



at last the two appeared to be synonymous. Then I learned I had overshot the mark by fifteen minutes, and going back found the path unostentatiously ascending the hillside. From a plateau farther on it did the same thing again through a fir wood, and from a still higher down like plateau I should have followed the same sort of diversion, but, preferring the broad way which leadeth to destruction, went on up a delightful valley where the path ran through a pine forest, just above the bed of a stream, and led apparently to a dead end, where a zigzag should take me to the col, but it did not, it just came to a dead end sooner than expected and thirty minutes had to be put

to credit of 'time wasted.' On the principle of trying before deciding I took up a fair pathway leading upwards through the forest, but finding it soon become vague and swampy turned back and shortly afterwards came face to face with a Catalan peasant. He had seen me enter the wood and having himself missed the path had followed. I told him that the path was no good and that my proposition was to go back farther, where a fork lay, but on hearing that he had crossed the col five times, and was certain that a ten minutes clamber would bring us to the path, turned back and followed submissively the man who knew. For one solid hour we toiled up and down, tearing through the brush.

-wood and following 'canals', or spaces made by torrents of water in time of storm, and still nothing came of it. Striking farther into the wood, and climbing through a shaded part where there was ice and snow, we could at last cry Eureka and push ahead over a ridge of the sierra to the Col de Pendis (5860 ft), reaching it about 1 p.m. There were a few clouds about but the air was clear and there was a charming view over serrated ridge, forest clad mountains, and white streaked peaks. The descent is abrupt and very rough. Some muleteers passed us en route to Bellver and took a message. In half an hour we reached the Font del Faig, a place renowned for its water, and it should



also be so for the fact that there is a house there where one can get a capital soup and an admirable omelette. So good indeed was the fare that we dallied with it as it were, and sauntered out as if on a picnic. Inside twenty minutes we were off the track again, and I insisted on seeking information from a lonely farm house. We proceeded, and shortly after entered a gorge, the narrowest, the steepest, and the roughest I was ever in. So little account was made as to whether the stream occupied the path or not that I asked if this was really the proper way, and learnt that it was the shortest way, but that when it rained hard the place was impassable in ten minutes. We had

not fairly emerged from the gorge when down the rain came; commencing with a few big drops, it soon fell in buckets. The atmospheric effects were magnificent. Comfortable mountain sides, when veiled in a driving mist, look awesome; height, depth, and distance, all increased. The driving rain would shut out a view completely, and then a clear rift would disclose a perfect picture. Hilaire Belloc should have been here; at the moment I wished I was elsewhere, for with sodden feet and the flip flap of cold wet trousers across the thighs, enjoyment of one's surroundings was somewhat difficult. A house came in view; we had a halt, a drink, and a smoke, and then, to save the daylight, went off

scrunching along the path, which was now fair enough save that it was running with water. My companion Ramón was going to Barcelona: he had chosen this way of travelling so as to include a day's excursion. He was 53 years of age and had not thoroughly recovered from a severe illness of three years before. We parted at Bagà, as he was going on for another hour to the railway terminus, to be ready to start by train early next morning. Shortly after arrival at Bagà a party of two men, three women, and a baby came in; they had crossed from Cerdaña, but by a higher pass, the Col de Jor (6857 ft.), and wet enough they were. Later, after dinner, an athletic, fresh complexioned young



man about 6ft 2in came in and quietly waited till a meal was served. It turned out afterwards that he had left Las Escaldas in Andorra, at four that morning. For the strongest man such a jaunt would be an effort as hard going under favourable conditions, it would mean about fourteen hours walking going all the time. Whatever made him do it I do not know, unless he was in a hurry to get clear. He seemed in no particular haste next morning.

Bagà under brilliant suns here is a picturesque and typical mountain town. It being Sunday morning the church was well filled for the 7 o'clock mass, half the congregation being men. There is a remarkable cross here dating back to



બાગે.

The Plaza.



BAGÀ



the X century, but it is out of sight and the time was not suitable to be looking for it. One old man at the inn was very interesting to listen to. He had been a muleteer all his life, knew Cataluña from end to end, and had had some interesting experiences in the seventies during the Carlist war and the time of the republic. He had been able through his knowledge of the difficult country round Saint Aniol to make contact with the fighting forces and to worm his way through them and keep his business going.

It was very hot going down the valley of the Llobregat, whose rushing swirling stream was swollen by the recent rains and turbid with its earthy bed. A little

beyond the coal mine of Figols, that stretches up the mountain side in tiers, I took a path to the left and entered a charming wood. The path gradually ascended, but with such variations and change of scene that the walk became a delightful ramble, and it seemed almost a pity to come out on an upland valley where a votive church has been built to Our Lady of Lourdes. The building is quite new and is not particularly attractive, but the spot has been well chosen as a place of pilgrimage. The way on led across a stretch of high land partly under cultivation, with the upper portion of a mountain ridge on either side. In the distance behind could be seen the Sierra de Cadi, imposing as

over, before were the mountains of Cataluña in a series of violet ranges, thinning out in colour as the distance was greater. It was not until the termination of the upper valley was reached that one could realise where one was, — 3000 feet above sea level, on the edge of a declivity with a highroad at the bottom like a ribbon, which it would take a full hour to reach by a rapid descent. As a matter of fact I was not in the right place at all, and ought to have born away over another mountain range, but there was nothing to complain of; the scenery was charming, the weather splendid, and there was a highway in view, which latter to one accustomed for over a fortnight to mountain



tracks meant safety at any hour of the twenty four. At the first house on the road I obtained some information, but was not willing to stop to discuss the war as its occupants wished; later, at Vilada, the proprietor of the café proved very sympathetically inclined to English people and he told me that several English engineers passed that way from time to time; they had two characteristics, they were as a rule big men and they strongly objected to oil in the cooking. The individuality of these valleys is most striking, it seems to extend to the fauna, seeing that the very caterpillars are of a special variety according to the valley they belong to. Butterflies of course varied considerably, the brown, yellow and

orange tinted varieties appeared in these parts; away in the central Pyrenees I had had the good fortune to see a purple emperor, a swallow tail, and a white admiral. Beetles too: in one place a dove coloured insect with cerise spots, in another a back of luminous emerald. A naturalist might wander to more disappointing places than these Pyrenean valleys.

At dusk I reached Borredà and put up for the night. A young man was sitting by the fire reading aloud the news from the front, or what purported to be the news from the front, to the landlord and his wife, and soon we were at it again till dinner was served

and the war was over. Amongst those present was a party of Catalans, two men and two women, on holiday, and they made a holiday of it. All their talk was in Catalan and difficult for me to follow, but of the wit and sprightliness of one of the women, who was very deaf and plain but possessed of a remarkably fine pair of sparkling grey eyes, and of the drollery of her companion, there could be no doubt. The meal over, these four asked the daughter of the house, a tall handsome woman, and myself to go with them to the café, as it was a feast day and should be commemorated. The café was crowded, but we did not stop in the public room proceeding



upstairs to a small room, where coffee etc were served and the laughing and talking continued. After a while the table was pushed back, a lad with an accordion entered, and dancing commenced, of which I was an interested spectator and intended so to remain, but this was not to be, and before we returned home in the moonlight, about 11 pm, I had danced a dozen times with four different partners. The old lady at the inn was very irate with the catalans and called one 'porch', which I believe to mean 'pig'.

At five the next morning the church bells started ringing and kept it up a long while. This is done all through the month of October for the recitation of the

rosary. There was a thick white mist at setting out, but after 9am it had vanished, the weather was summer like, and the way along the sierra, with a dip across an intervening valley and along another sierra, was all one could wish. At one point there was a distant view of Montserrat, wherein the isolated mountain looked almost unreal in its delicacy of tint and texture. A mule harnessed in a tartana pulled up short on sighting me and turned deliberately round in his tracks; the driver had some difficulty to get him round again. At the edge of the descent towards the valley of the Ter stands the village of Alpens, built on a natural rock, which serves as its pavement

and gives it a character of which artists have taken full advantage. San Quirico de Besora, at the base of the long free wheel road of fifteen kilometers that runs from Alpens, is on the banks of the Ter and on the railway line between Ripoll and Vich, just inside the ancient Comarca or county of Ripollés, and no state decree could make it geographically belong elsewhere, for the climate and vegetation of San Quirico show a marked difference to those of the open wind swept Plana of Vich, only two kilometers to the south. Quite close to San Quirico is Montesquieu, a fair sized place, for this valley is rich in minerals as well as agriculture and consequently populous.



There is a good new road from San  
Zurico right up into the mountains eastward  
to Santa Maria de Besora, and so brilliant  
was the weather on this 27th of October  
that it seemed more like midsummer,  
and it was a delight to leave roadway  
and dwelling and enter a beech wood,  
where the shade was so thick that foliage  
and path were both wet. There was a  
good deal of bird life and wild fruits  
were plentiful. Clear of the wood I  
came across a man ploughing on the  
upland, and was advised to call at his  
house a little farther on and get directions.  
It was a pleasant dwelling, with a shrine  
in the principal room. The man's wife  
and two daughters were at home; they

provided bread, apples, anis, and wine, and sent me up a short valley to a ridge visible from the back of the house. At the ridge I found a cluster of houses and there got directions which took me over continuously ascending but less pleasant ground, for it was boggy in parts, often steep and slippery. Progress in accordance with the map had been so excellent so far that I had visions of various happenings, which need not be related as they did not come off. The crowning point in the day's walk was to be the Collpet, 4100 feet high, which gives access to the district of Olot. This I blissfully imagined was before me, but, having after much toil ascended the col, beheld a long path leading

in a semicircle towards another col, some distance away, a good half hours walk. The farther col was reached, but that was not Colfret, and again there was a semicircle towards another col with a lonely farmhouse, Can Rujol, some little way in front of it. By following a short cut I managed to cross a stream twice over, crawl through some bushes, cross a number of ploughed fields, and arrive at the back of the farmhouse instead of the front, and incidentally lose a good ten minutes, — but that is often the way of short cuts. There appeared to be a sawmill on the premises, and a number of men engaged there came into their meal just after I arrived. They had



stew, I had bread soup with pork fat served in an earthenware plate and eaten with a wooden spoon. It was very good; there was also bread and wine. The cost was 25 centimos. The two women in charge, and some of the men, began to talk about the war and my journey. The mistress warned me that the usual road, that via Ridaura, was a rotten one, and I overheard one man say in Catalan that it would rain. It was my intention to descend to San Privat but when, on at length reaching Collfret, the uninterrupted view of vale and mountain proved to be obscured by a white mist, and over to the right where lay the path to San Privat thick clouds were rolling up, I began to

doubt. A few minutes below the col is a farmhouse and I put it to a man there, "Which is the better way down to Olot?" "The way to Olot is by Ridawia," and he was so positive about it as being the way that I followed his direction, and set off over a clear path and in a comparatively clear atmosphere round a big semi-circle towards a wooded col. This col passed, the words of the woman at the Can Pujol came to me, for the way was at one time a series of steps with the treads broken up and set on edge, at another a boggy path through a wood, and then a combination of the two, until, about three in the afternoon, I reached a little clearing with a cottage and apparently

a choice of paths. A man at work directed me into a wood, and soon after entering the clouds settled down. At one turning in the steep descending path there was a striking scene. It was a little grove of beech trees, the leaves of their richest autumn tints of orange and yellow. The effect produced by the mist was of a miniature cathedral, lighted by the mellowed rays of richly painted medieval glass. In the midst of enjoying this scene I felt a slow, big drop of water, and then another, and another. Shifting the knap-sack I got into my overcoat and put up the umbrella. The mist had vanished and the rain was falling fast. The staircase nature of the path continued, with the



addition of sticky mud, from which I hoped to emerge shortly. In about ten minutes the wood proper was left behind and thereafter the path was more or less open; but the muddy track in the wood had become a roaring torrent of water, of the colour of milk chocolate. Soon I was ankle deep, then halfway to my knees. Slipping and sliding, with the aid of a good alpenstock, I kept going for a while when, - souse, - down I came with the water rushing round as I have read it does at Lodore. These mishaps happened more than occasionally, they were frequent. It turned out afterwards that the knapsack and all its contents were saturated. Some clean clothes I was carrying acquired

a lovely ochre tint. On one occasion the alpenstock just saved a nasty slide over the outer side, which was nearly precipitous with a few straggling bushes growing on it. The clayey soil got greasier and greasier, the force of the rushing water got more and more, and I indulged in curses loud and deep at my plight, dreading most of all the oncoming of night. Of only one thing can I feel proud, and that is that in lieu of keeping the flag flying I kept the umbrella up. Even when floundering in the turbid torrent, with my trousers in the water and my hands wildly clutching any rock or bush handy, the umbrella always remained up; it may have left my grasp for a brief interval, but it was

never lowered. However, even this seemingly interminable jaunt had its end. A little before 5pm the path improved, the torrent was diverted, and turning a bend in the way a village appeared below, and for the first time since leaving the man on the clearing at 3 o'clock I came across a cottage and ascertained my whereabouts. Sudden, annoyed, and with battered feet I entered Kidaura debating whether it were better to stop there the night or to push on to Olot to quarters that I knew of. It appeared there was one inn there I entered. It was a decent looking place. "I want dinner and a bed?" "Come in," said the landlord, and went over to his wife sitting by the fireside. "Yes, he is a"



"german", I heard him say and coming back he informed me that he could not put me up. I rated him, demanded to see the Civil Guard, who were not there, and generally let myself go, as I was now determined to proceed, finishing up with, "Call this" "hospitality, bring me brandy". He brought it, "Aguadiente Señor y agua", (Brandy, sir, and water), and put it down with a flourish, "Gracias", (Thanks), said I, and put down a penny, then bidding him farewell set out. The little episode at the inn had been of medicinal value; I felt in a glow, and started off blithely for Olot. The rain had ceased; it was growing dark. Not far on the road a priest and a peasant were talking, and I related my

experience at the inn. The priest did not belong to Ridaura, but he promised to inform the one who did; for it is not well for travellers that innkeepers should not realise their public duties. Olot was about six kilometers farther on but the way was a highroad, and just as well for darkness and the rain fell simultaneously, and it was wretched work ploughing through the mud without a glimmer of light and the rain driving more and more. The lights of Olot appeared at last, and when at length I turned into a narrow street a figure came from behind a corner and running after me called out, "What have you in that knapsack?" "I am an Englishman."

"An Englishman I'll very well go on."  
Hot coffee and brandy, a suit of clothes,  
and a good dinner to sit down to at 7  
o'clock, and the afternoon excursion  
seemed what it was, — an incident; in  
the experience of it, however, it seemed  
much more than that.

The rain had not ceased the following  
morning, neither had my clothes dried, so  
that it was not until after lunch that  
it was fit to go out. An English boxer  
and footballer named Mack, who instructs  
the local youth, lives at Clot, so I looked  
him up. There seems to be quite a  
number of Englishmen following a similar  
occupation, and at Barcelona there are  
frequent displays of boxing of the kind



held at the National Sporting Club. Owing to the heavy downpour the waterfall of Sallent, near St. Privat, was full and a magnificent sight nearly five miles off, which was as near as I could get to it; the high mountains roundabout were covered with freshly fallen snow, and places I had crossed within the past week would now be impassable.

With an entirely clean wardrobe and a knapsack nearly dry I set out, after the day's rest at Clot, in the direction of Figueras; a road fairly familiar. It was dull but fine, and all went well until about 11am when the rain started, which meant a long halt at a lonely house, — where they made

me very welcome;— and a late arrival  
at Besalu for the midday meal. The roads  
had become bad, and there were over  
sixteen miles to do, so the rest of the journey  
was done by coach, or more accurately  
by tartana, a two wheeled covered cart  
with two horses tandem fashion. We did  
the journey in three and a half hours, and  
I should say the first half took two and  
a half; the road was simply awful.  
Every now and then there would be a lurch,  
and you would be shot from your seat;  
if you had good luck you pitched forward  
against a fellow traveller, but if bad you  
shot upwards against the wooden frame-  
work of the coach cover. One could not  
talk; it was difficult to smoke, and the

view was more often than not obscured by trees. Once in a while a mule team dragging a heavily laden cart would pass, and occasionally a pedestrian, but there was not much life on the road until we got near Figueras, and met those who were taking the air. There had been no rain at Figueras all day. A dealer in mules, with whom I had dined at Sort, seeing me at the hotel invited me to join his party of four, which included a French mule dealer. Owing to the war these men had been very busy, and my acquaintance had travelled from Isterri to Barcelona since I had seen him last. They were a jolly party.

As if to emphasise the fact that it was time to clear out and go home the



rain came down again next morning, and the journey to the frontier would have been dull and uninteresting but for the wrangling of two market women in two separate compartments of the third class carriage. One was restrained and bitter, the other peppery and eventually wild. The rough catalan tongue and the graphic gestures lifted it out of the region of a vulgar row into the dramatic sphere. There were some soldiers and other men in the carriage but they preserved strict neutrality, which was but wise. The train was delayed at Vilajuiga by three fat pigs, one of which was particularly violent and had to be half dragged, half carried to the railway van. The last Spaniard I talked with before leaving the country made

a great point that the French had not responded to the call to arms. He, like so many, was impressed by the prowess of German arms, and in his case it seemed to carry with it a conviction that France was losing virility and wanting in manhood. He did not take any such view of England. In travelling through France observation offered no justification for his criticism until arrival in Paris, but there, on the boulevards, there were hundreds of young men of whom one would be inclined to say, "why have they" "not responded?"



EN AVANT  
TOUJOURS



Heureux ceux qui sont morts dans les grandes batailles  
Couchés dessus le sol à la face de Dieu . . . .  
Heureux ceux qui sont morts dans une juste guerre —  
Heureux ceux qui sont morts pour quatre coins de terre.

PÉGUY

*The poet was killed in battle 5th September 1917.*

My parting glimpse of Sunny Spain was of a land obscured by driving rain, and of people clad in waterproofs and carrying dripping umbrellas. There was no change across the frontier, but the covered-in station at Cerbère made it more comfortable. There were very few passengers. After passing through the Customs one had to pass on to the bureau where a Commissaire of police examined the passports. Mine was in order so far but the military commandant of the Pyrénées Orientales had, within the past fortnight, given instructions that all passports were to bear the photographs of the holders, and until that regulation was complied with one could not enter France. However

on producing a photo, which I had by me in case of necessity, it was affixed to the document, stamped and dated, and my proposed route recorded. This arrangement seemed the most sensible of any, and the best preventive of fraud. The train service was a very poor one. It was impossible to get through to Toulouse in the day, and there was nothing to do but to parade the platform, — varied with a meal, — for three and a half hours, and then take a slow train rather than the through express and thus save a wait of another two hours. The journey passed pleasantly enough. The weather gradually cleared and Canigou, — a vast white mountain backed by the retreating rain clouds, — was visible



before sunset. My vis-à-vis was going to Lyons, another, a big stout oldish man, to Toulouse. The latter was very irate; he had waited six hours at a railway station for a train which never came. "Nom de Dieu," "l'administration est fou," and we had a series of addresses on railway administration, the evil of elections in time of war, and on the type of workman who is starving and wants work and the minute he gets it forms a trades union and goes on strike. Others were attracted from adjoining compartments. The old gentleman had a good command of language but at points he failed for words, and then he always said, "et ceterā, et ceterā." My personal agreement with his views on elections stamped

me as a man of intelligence, *pro. tem.*, and we parted cordially at Narbonne. The Hotel de France was full of travellers forced to stop the night, and in the dining room were a number of soldiers who, apparently, were being given a first class meal before going away on active service. The city of Narbonne was full of soldiers. At the Café, when the waiter learned I was English he fetched a young soldier of the line, who was formerly in a business house in Monument Street, City, and he in turn called to an engineer, who came in, and had been with the Paper Trust at Glasgow. The former was a quiet, level-headed, not over confident young man; the latter a handsome, romantic, over confident, typical Gascon, who had

been all over the world and seen the  
soldiers of all nations, but ~~the~~ soldier  
was the man from Tarn et Garonne, his  
own province, "Very short, yes, but broad"  
"across the shoulders", who could march  
with a tremendous weight on his back  
and go without food for forty eight hours  
"What shall we do? Ah we have them"  
"like that, (shows his fist). What does"  
"Joffre say, - and he is not a man of"  
"many words. 'I am beginning to know'"  
"them'. That is all. 'I am beginning to'"  
"know them'. We are not latins for nothing."  
Then he queried "What do you really"  
"think the germans thought about the"  
"English?" "That we were played out,"  
I replied. "Ah yes, these germans can"



"fight; oh yes, they are soldiers I tell you, but they are thickheads." They told me that a man got two months training and he was ready to be packed off to the front. Their familiar uniforms were being replaced by others of a bluish gray colour. At 9 o'clock they were off to barracks.

After the previous day's rain the panorama of the Pyrenees, swathed in soft mists under a blue sky, made the railway journey a pleasure. Others in the carriage were spending the night at Toulouse and proceeding to Paris early on the Sunday morning, but by going on to Bordeaux it was possible to get to the capital by a night train. The cost for the extra travelling was less than five francs but it did not

seem to be generally done. At Toulouse there was a long train of Belgian refugees. The young and middle aged looked on the whole as if in due course time would heal their wounds; but the faces of the aged were a tragedy in being; new scenes had no interest for them; the centre of their thoughts a never fading image of destruction and death, their short span of life a time of vain regrets, of sad and awful memories. In and about the railway stations of France were a number of wagons belonging to the Belgian State Railways; one of these, standing by itself on a siding at Agen, seemed more eloquent than much seen on the way, for it bore in plain white letters on the top left hand corner the

name 'Louvain'. Our carriage was full of soldiers, most of them privates of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Line moving forward to the front. They were well behaved and jolly. The usual variety, one quiet, another talkative, a ruddy faced dry countryman, and one a little undersized lad with big eyes and the suspicion of a moustache he was very proud of; he was the only one who carried a water bottle, in the filling of which he nearly lost the train once, and he took a great pride in passing the bottle round and supplying the others with drink after they had had their bread and chocolate. It is not a good thing to give way to morbid fancies but it was impossible to shake off the impression, which remains



when writing this six weeks afterwards, that that boy would never return alive from the battlefield; it seemed to be written in his eyes. Bordeaux station was much more lively than on the outward journey; soldiers in heavy marching order, one private evidently a priest, stacks of rifles, and a big civilian crowd, for the next day was All Saints' Day, a Sunday, and a public holiday, — a triple combination. Notwithstanding the war our train to Paris had to be run in duplicate; our carriage was full and every passenger went through. The express from Irun on the Spanish frontier was crowded also; in the first class carriages there were a number of Englishwomen, of that unmistakable

plain looking british variety, rich and unsympathetic, who give rise to many a cartoon in the continental papers. Anyhow, whatever they may have lacked, these ladies had no doubt about which way they would travel, and did not show any of the fears of a professional boxer, I heard of, who was going to London via Bilbao and Cardiff because of the mines in the North Sea. When we found that all in our carriage were going to Paris we made the best of it and settled down, being all provided with food and drink, wraps and so on; we numbered nine, five women and four men. The man next to me was away between two and three hours, which was an advantage; and going into

the corridor I found him in lively conversation with a rather good looking woman. His wife, who was bright and lively, during his absence had an excellent repast of cold chicken etc, which seemed to annoy the husband when he learned what he had missed. Some high officials had travelled to Paris by our train and there were a number of officers and motor cars at the terminus.

It was a lovely morning and the city was soon crowded with people, as the trains from the provinces arrived. Now and then an English officer, or private, would pass along and arouse the interest of the country visitors. Notre Dame was crowded for High Mass. After the celebration a priest



advanced to the altar steps and asked for the prayers of the congregation for the soldiers, and named the British. The barricades, which were erected when the Germans got so near to Paris, remained; and the gates in the fortifications were boarded up, and only the posterns open. Two deep trenches had been dug, protected by bags of sand, and there were barricades formed of trunks of trees, barbed wire, and chains; those travelling by tramcar had, in consequence, to change when entering or leaving the city. The Bois de Vincennes looked well with the tints of autumn and the island studded sheet of ornamental water, but it is difficult for one who has just returned from glorious natural scenery to properly appreciate the artificial, however

well done the gardening may be. The river steamers were crowded,— every moderate member of the London County Council must surely feel some twinge of shame when he sees one,— simple, inexpensive, and quite adequate for the purpose, they glide along one after the other in both directions. Among many in uniform was a wounded noncommissioned officer wearing the Legion of Honour, doubtless earned since the war broke out. About four in the afternoon there was a crowd of people in the Place de la Concorde gazing skyward, and looking south a monoplane could just be made out like a piece of cloud for colour, presently it dipped from against the blue and disappeared in the mist. 'Le Matin,' next morning, stated that a german aeroplane

had appeared over Paris on the Sunday, but whether this was the taube, or the frenchman that chased him away, I was unable to ascertain. Places of amusement were closed, with one or two rare exceptions, and most of the hotels were turned into hospitals, so that after dinner there was nothing else to do but while an hour away in some cafe, but it did not take long to find out that all were closed at 8 o'clock, and walking about, though Paris was well enough lit, grew irksome. This experience served to decide the question of returning home, for a visit to Sens to see the ruins, though feasible, did not savour of a holiday, and life in Paris, without its gaiety, had no particular attraction either; wherefore, by 8 am, our train had set out through a countryside, whose only sign of war was an





DIEPPE.

Crucifix on Eastern Arm  
of Harbour Mouth.



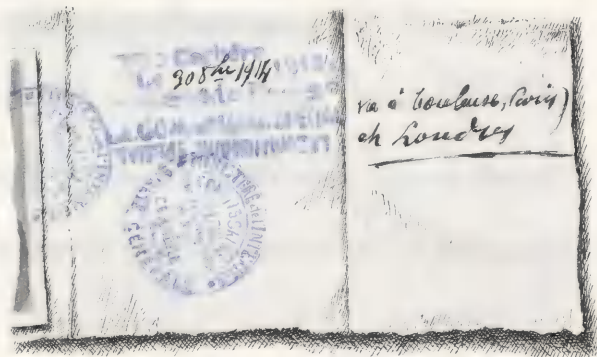
occasional sentry at some bridge or station. There were no croissants in Paris, and when I asked a baker the reason, he said it was, in the first place, due to the departure of german and austrian bakers, and secondly, to the general shortage of journeymen, which restricted the variety of bread that could be baked. As the morning wore on, and we got well on our way, trains of soldiers and sailors were passed, one from Harre to Paris, another with british artillery going to the front. At Dieppe there were british nurses in all sorts of curious uniforms, with red crosses here, there, and everywhere: and now our troubles began. Before going on board all passports had to be produced to british officials, and as no preliminary arrangements had been made there was a great deal of unnecessary crowding



and pushing and delay. Several passports seemed to be irregular but nobody was stopped. The crossing was pleasant and not a warship was to be seen, until we caught sight of Dover when approaching Folkestone. The steamer being the "Paris" we did the journey in  $3\frac{3}{4}$  hours and made up the delay in starting, but all to no purpose for the passport business had to be gone through all over again, and, in addition, a doctor was in attendance who took each passenger by the wrist, looked into his or her eyes, and said, "Pass on." One gentleman demanded to know the reason for this piece of tomfoolery, seeing that he was a British subject and could not be kept out of the country. The doctor replied that if he were found to be suffering from an infectious

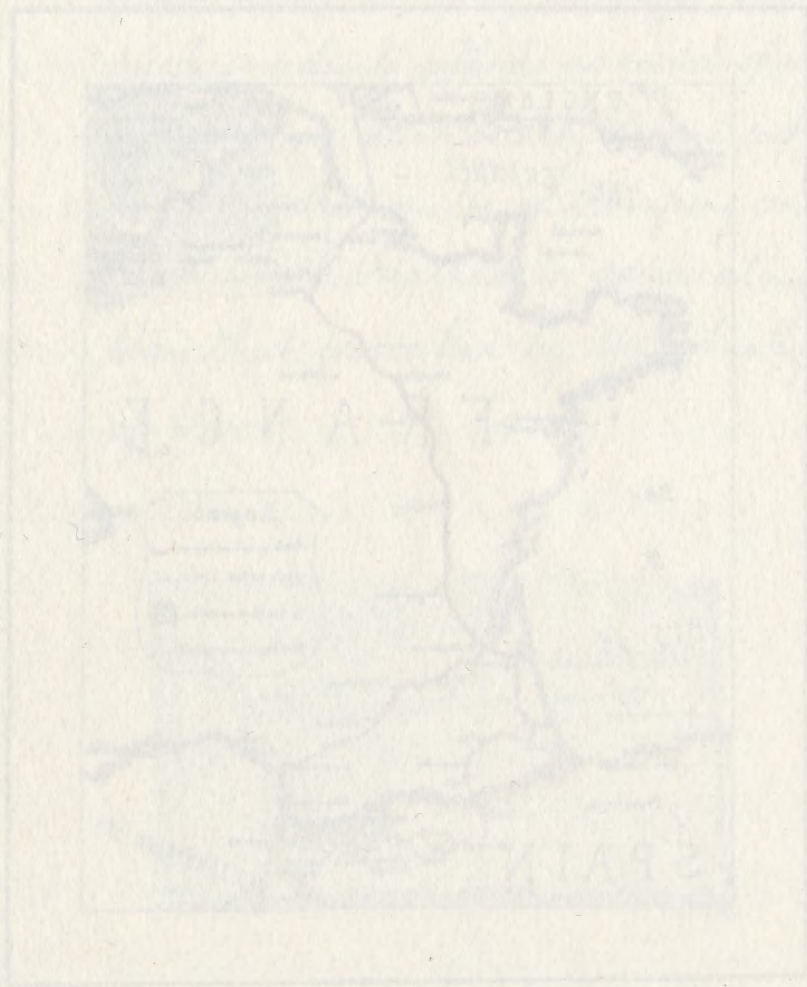
disease he would be put in quarantine "Damme,"  
"Sir, I never have had an infectious disease,"  
was the not unnatural reply, for he had been  
standing for an hour and a quarter in one  
position outside the smoking room door. In the  
middle of the proceedings way had to be made  
for a Countess and party of ten, who claimed  
precedence. This aroused the pent up feelings  
of the long suffering passengers, and there was  
a howl of execration which reminded one of  
the French revolution. Certainly the woman  
was very foolish to have pushed her rights  
forward on such an occasion. There was  
a foreign office messenger who might reasonably  
have claimed precedence but had the  
sense not to. Eventually we arrived in  
London one and three quarter hours late,

mainly due to a process of examination which would have let Lody through; but after all such incidents afford as much of interest as annoyance, particularly to one refreshed by four hundred miles of tramping and who had, for a while, breathed a saner atmosphere than that provoked by the ghastly mockery of war.













END



